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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7941
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5190
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2420
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2546
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4559
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RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9642
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: MAS PROPOSES PRESS OMBUDSMAN

11. (U) A Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) Constituent Assembly member has proposed expanding the responsibilities of Bolivia's human rights ombudsman or creating a new "press ombudsman" to hear citizen complaints regarding the press. Reactions to the proposal were mixed. Former journalist and Bolivia's first human rights ombudsman Ana Maria Campero argued that the proposal has some merit, but is "very delicate and should be debated thoroughly with press organizations." Current human rights ombudsman Waldo Albarracin responded to the proposal by stating that there are laws and norms in place to prevent unethical journalism, but that they have rarely been exercised. Press associations, in turn have generally rejected the proposal. The president of the La Paz Association of Journalists said that the measure poses a "threat to free speech." Meanwhile, the executive of the Confederation of the Press Workers (a labor union) has taken a wait-and-see attitude, stating that it had not seen a copy of the proposal, but that it should be reviewed rationally and calmly.

Comment

12. (SBU) Many within the Bolivian press recognize that the industry suffers from a lack of professionalism. Recently, the press instituted its own self-regulating body to handle cases of unethical reporting. However, President Morales' rhetorical hostility to the mainstream media, the launching of a Venezuelan-financed radio network, and the GOB's restriction on advertising dollars to what it considers opposition media outlets make many journalists leery of any new MAS proposals to "improve" the press.
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